



# Measure Up

Assessment news for eighth-grade teachers

## NAEP Results Show That...

### Highlights of NAEP 2007

- Assessments will be conducted in grade 8 in reading, writing, and mathematics between January 22 and March 2, 2007.
- Reading and mathematics results for eighth-graders nationwide will be reported in fall 2007. Writing results will be reported in spring 2008.
- Teachers in sampled schools will answer questions about their background, training, and instructional practices.

**75**

The percent of eighth-graders who **agreed or strongly agreed that they learn a lot** when reading books

- ★ Eighth-grade students who reported it was **important to do well on the reading test** scored higher than students who reported it was not very important.
- ★ Eighth-grade students who **read at least 11 pages each day in school and for homework** scored higher than students who read 10 or fewer pages.
- ★ Eighth-grade students who **discussed interpretations of what they have read** at least once a month scored higher than students who never or hardly ever did so.
- ★ Eighth-grade students who **wrote long answers on reading tests** at least once a week scored higher than students who wrote long answers on reading tests one to two times per year.
- ★ Eighth-grade students who **talked about their studies at home** at least once a week scored higher than students who talked about their studies at home one to two times a month.
- ★ Eighth-grade students who **read fiction books or stories outside of school** at least once a week scored higher than students who did so once or twice a month.
- ★ Eighth-grade students whose teachers reported **spending at least three hours per week on mathematics instruction** scored higher than students whose teachers reported spending less than three hours per week on mathematics instruction.

## Using NAEP in Your Classroom



**With the release of NAEP results, selected items from each assessment are also released. Teachers can access the items, answer keys and scoring guides, sample student responses, and national performance results of eighth-grade students using the NAEP Questions Tool at <http://nationsreportcard.gov>. The Questions Tool includes both multiple-choice and short and extended constructed-response items for all NAEP subjects and grades. Below, read about using a reading sample question. In future issues, sample questions from other content areas will be explored.**

# 44

The percent of eighth-graders who **read for fun on their own** at least once or twice a week

In 2005, eighth-graders responded to questions about “The Fish,” a poem by Elizabeth Bishop. After reading the poem, students responded to two multiple-choice, six short-constructed-response, and one extended-constructed-response questions. The context for this passage is reading for literary experience, which involves the reader in exploring themes, events, characters, settings, problems, and the language of literary works.

The NAEP reading framework guides the development of questions for the reading assessment. The framework is adopted by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) and is available at [www.nagb.org](http://www.nagb.org). The NAEP reading framework specifies that students are to respond to questions in a variety of contexts, such as reading for literary experience, reading for information, and reading to perform a task. For all constructed-response questions, students are asked to use information from the text to explain/support their answer.

In addition to contexts for reading, the framework also specifies aspects of reading that characterize the tasks readers are expected to complete for each question, such as forming a general understanding, developing interpretation, and making reader/text connections.

For example, one sample question about “The Fish” poem asked that students: “Describe how the speaker’s decision to let the fish go is related to something you have experienced, read, or seen.” Here, the reader must connect information in the text with knowledge and experience, or “make reader/text connections.” The process often requires the student to apply ideas in the text to the real world.

A student response demonstrating evidence of full comprehension for this question is: “This relates to when I caught a lightning bug and I felt sorry for it so I let it go.” A student response demonstrating evidence of little or no comprehension is: “She knows right from wrong.” Scorers commented that the first response provides a basis of comparison and relates it to a similar experience. The scorers wrote that the second response provides only personal opinion for why she let the fish go. For this question, 29 percent of students in public and nonpublic schools gave an answer demonstrating evidence of full comprehension. Twenty-eight percent of students gave an answer demonstrating evidence of no comprehension.

### Sample Grade 8 Reading Question

*“Suggest one way to improve the guide to Metro’s Fares and Passes to make it easier to use. Explain how it would be an improvement.”*

Teachers can use released eighth-grade items such as these in their classrooms. For example, one eighth-grade reading item includes a series of questions titled “Metro,” asking students to use the information provided on a brochure from the Washington, D.C., Metro system. By using a set of released items in the classroom, teachers can see how their students compare to students nationwide. To access all released items, visit <http://nationsreportcard.gov> and select “Sample Questions.”

- To use released eighth-grade items in the classroom, teachers should visit <http://nationsreportcard.gov> and select “Sample Questions.”
- From there, teachers can select “Search Options,” and then a subject and grade 8. A series of questions will appear, and teachers can select to review the questions, sample student responses, and performance data for students nationwide.

## Prompting Writing

In 2007, eighth-graders will take the NAEP writing assessment. On the writing assessment, students are asked to write for a variety of purposes: narrative, informative, and persuasive. Students also write on a variety of tasks and for many different audiences. Most students respond to two 25-minute prompts. Various stimulus materials are used in the writing prompts. In 2002, the prompts included writing a

### **Sample Grade 8 Writing Prompt**

*"If you were told that you could save just one book for future generations, which book would you choose?"*

story about the student's first day as president, choosing one book that could be saved for future generations, and

persuading the public that school should start later in the day because students need more sleep. In the 2007 eighth-grade writing assessment, prompts will be evenly distributed across the three purposes: persuasive, informative, and narrative. There are 20 prompts used across the nation and in each school, although each student will respond to only two.

Each student participating in the writing assessment is given a brochure on planning and reviewing writing. The brochure offers numerous suggestions for getting started and revising writing. Students are also given blank pages in their assessment booklets for pre-writing.

To see released prompts from previous assessments, teachers can visit <http://nationsreportcard.gov> and select "Sample Questions."



## Grade 8 Science Performance Unchanged Overall, Black Students Show Gains

In 2005, a nationally representative sample of eighth-graders took the NAEP science assessment. The national results were released on May 24, 2006. While the overall average score for eighth-grade students showed no significant difference compared to the results in 1996 and 2000, there were some changes in student group performance. Black students showed an increase of 3 score points since the 1996 assessment. This gain for Black students was the only score increase among all racial/ethnic groups at grade 8. Additionally, students who were eligible for the school lunch program showed a gain from 2000 to 2005. However, significant score gaps still persisted between White and minority students, and between students eligible and not eligible for the school lunch program.

Interesting facts emerged from the background questionnaires that the sampled eighth-grade students and their teachers answered. Teachers of participating eighth-graders were asked about their major or minor course of study in both undergraduate and graduate school. The majority of eighth-graders (about

56 percent) were taught by teachers who majored or minored in education and had at least a minor in one area of science (Earth, physical, or life).

*"Maria has one glass of pure water and one glass of salt water, which look exactly alike. Explain what Maria would do, without tasting the water, to find out which glass contains the salt water."*

As with all NAEP assessments, some of the test items and student performance on these items were released. Overall, 23 percent of eighth-graders gave an answer to the question above that was rated "Complete." An example of a "Complete" student response stated: "One thing she could do is evaporate each glass of water. The glass with salt water in it should have salt left in it when the water has evaporated." To view complete results, all released items, scoring guides, and sample student responses to constructed-response questions, please visit <http://nationsreportcard.gov>.



# 19

The percent of eighth-graders who **read more than 20 pages a day** in school and for homework



## Frequently Asked Questions About NAEP

### Assessment Day Tips

- Encourage your students to do their best.
- Explain to your students that they are representing many other eighth-graders across the country.
- Emphasize to your students the importance of showing the country what eighth-grade students know and can do.

#### What is NAEP?

The National Assessment of Educational Progress, often called The Nation's Report Card, is the only measure of student achievement in the United States that you can use to compare the performance of students in your state with the performance of students across the nation or in other states.

#### Do the NAEP assessments replace the state assessments?

No. NAEP and state assessments measure different constructs but work together to provide information on student performance.

#### What are the goals of NAEP?

NAEP has two major goals: to compare student achievement in states and other jurisdictions and to track changes in achievement of

fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-graders over time in mathematics, reading, writing, science, history, and other content domains.

#### What does NAEP assess and how is the content determined?

A subject-specific content framework, developed by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB), guides each assessment. The frameworks are available at [www.nagb.org](http://www.nagb.org), and they include a range of subject-specific content and thinking skills needed by students to deal with the complex issues they encounter inside and outside their classrooms.

#### Can my school get school-level or individual student-level results?

No. The Nation's Report Card provides data for large groups of students. Typically, state, regional, and national

results are reported for grades 4 and 8. At grade 12, only national and regional results are reported.

#### Why should students participate in NAEP?

The participation of each student selected is important to the success of The Nation's Report Card because only a representative sample will allow the assessment to provide fair, accurate, and useful information on student achievement. Each student represents many other students in his or her state.

#### How can teachers prepare their students for NAEP?

Special preparation is not necessary or expected. You can encourage your students to come to school well-rested and to try their best on assessment day.

# 97

The percent of eighth-graders whose teachers spent at least three hours a week on mathematics instruction

## NAEP in the News

Recently, news media, research groups, and teacher advocacy organizations have focused on educational assessment and accountability.

Because NAEP is the only assessment that uses a nationally representative sample, many articles and research reports cite NAEP data. These articles and reports are varied in their perspective and focus. Some articles compare other assessment results to NAEP; others focus on the trend data that NAEP provides. Researchers are able to track student performance over time and across the country. The following columns contain a sampling of reports and articles which reference NAEP.

- The **New York Times** published "Young Students Post Solid Gains in Federal Tests" about the release of the NAEP Long-Term Trend reading and mathematics results.

- The **National Education Association** cited NAEP results as a confirmation of No Child Left Behind testing. This article offers key questions for teachers to consider when analyzing NAEP State results.

- The **Wall Street Journal** published a story, "How Charlotte Tops Big Cities in School Tests," with an analysis of the results from the NAEP 2005 Trial Urban District Assessment.

- The **Christian Science Monitor** published an article about the release of the NAEP 2005 Science results, "Elementary schoolers climb in science scores." The article documents that there was virtually no change among eighth-graders from previous scores in 1996 and 2000.

**As educational accountability continues to dominate education news, one thing remains a constant: NAEP data will continue to be referenced in assessment articles.**

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